

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent  
*Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15<sup>th</sup> District*



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## Congressman Dent signs onto bipartisan bill to extend Medicare drug plan enrollment

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) cosponsored a bill that would waive the Medicare drug plan's late enrollment fee for this year. The bill, H.R. 3599, was introduced Wednesday by Rep. Nancy Johnson (D-CT) with 24 bipartisan cosponsors.

More than 38 million Americans signed up for the Medicare prescription drug plan by the May 15 deadline, including more than 70,000 Medicare beneficiaries in the 15<sup>th</sup> District. Congressman Dent held more than a dozen informational events leading up to the Jan. 1 roll-out, and also hosted several enrollment events since then. Seniors are saving an average \$1,100 on prescription drugs through the program.

"Now that the deadline has passed, I think there are enough people who, through no fault of their own, didn't get the chance to sign up," Congressman Dent said. "It is a first-year program — I think it's fair to provide this waiver."

Congressman Dent rejected enacting any waivers or extensions prior to the deadline out of concern it wouldn't be fair to people who signed up on time, and would increase premiums and the administrative cost of the program. He had said he would review waiving the extra penalty after the deadline if it appeared there was a genuine need.

“There is a reason you set deadlines, and there is also an appropriate time to review them,” Congressman Dent said.

Congressman Dent noted that any cost of waiving the penalties is already budgeted. The penalty repeal would be paid for with the PPO stabilization fund, a \$10 million discretionary fund that the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) created in case problems arose with implementation.

“Some eligible seniors were scared off from signing up by some disingenuous groups badmouthing the program for political purposes,” Congressman Dent said. “That’s unfortunate. This is a program that will help millions of seniors and it needs to be accessible to everyone.”

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